

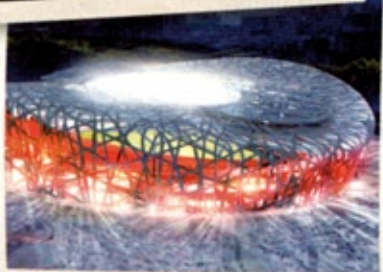
Pop tart

Edited by Jolanda Waskito

(below) The new faces of stadium design: Wembley Stadium, Allianz Arena and Beijing's National Stadium aim to impress.

HAVE YOU NOTICED...

STADIUMS ARE GOING EXTREME



It seems a stadium is no longer a stadium unless it can comfortably seat the population of Ballarat in first-class comfort. One-hundred-thousand-seat all-purpose arenas are becoming the norm across the globe, and this new generation of super-stadiums is in a league of its own. The new Wembley Stadium in London, due for completion this year, will seat 90,000 and have a gigantic, retractable glass roof allowing maximum sunlight for growing grass and minimum rain-delayed play. It will be the biggest stadium of its kind in the world, with a \$1.9 billion construction budget to match.

Arizona has the opposite problem: too much sun. They've spent \$600 million on a closed-roof airconditioned stadium for the Cardinals American football team. The grass sits outside the arena on a giant tray with 500 wheels - leaving the playing area grass- and dirt-free for conventions and the like. When it's time for kick-off, the grass is simply wheeled into place.

Stadiums have also become sought-after statement pieces for high-profile architects. Take dynamic Swiss design duo Herzog and de Meuron. Their current 100,000-seat project for the Beijing Olympics resembles a gigantic doughnut drizzled with chocolate. Previously, they created the Allianz Arena, a soccer stadium in Munich, out of super-strong plastic pillows - its nickname is "The Inflatable Boat". Depending on who's playing, the stadium glows in the corresponding team colours - red, white or blue..

Chris Bosse from PTW architects in Sydney (one of the companies behind our own 100,000-seat Olympic stadium at Homebush Bay) describes the Allianz Arena as a "soccer temple". All hail, the mighty god of sport! ADAM McCULLOCH